

JPRS-57994
851/16 Jan 73

COSTA RICA

FORMER PRESIDENT CRITICIZES MINISTER'S CONDUCT

[Statement by former President Mario Echandi; San Jose, La Prensa Libre, Spanish, 15 December 1972, p 4]

Following are statements made by former President of the Republic Mario Echandi in response to those made by Minister of Labor and Social Welfare Danilo Jimenez Veiga -- and published by us yesterday -- in connection with the Vesco case.

The statements by attorney Echandi Jimenez read as follows:

In response to a base reference made by Minister Jimenez Veiga, I reacted with the vehemence and indignation which were called for. Jimenez Veiga takes this to reflect a lack of breeding. For him it would have been better to follow the example of his father-in-law and protector and say nothing. I must recognize Jimenez Veiga's feeling that his father-in-law's habit of not talking with his mouth full is in good taste.

Honest Conduct

With the reaffirmation by the President's son-in-law that all my business dealings have been legal, the country has proof that when things are honest, even opponents and the servants of the powerful are forced to admit it.

1970 Elections

The result of the 1970 elections could have disturbed me just after the voting was over. But in view of the results of his father-in-law's administration as President, it not only does not disturb me, but it fills my spirit and conscience with peace, seeing that I did not warn the country of anything different than what is happening. As such an extreme, the truth of the above becomes evident. Even the most frenzied partisans of Figueres have come out saying, as Congressman Jenaro Valverde has done, that President Figueres misled his own voters and that if another election were held, the result would be totally adverse.

This condemnatory cry concerning the government administration comes from the highest liberationist circles.

Vesco Fees

I fully understand Jimenez Veiga's attitude in attempting to defend Vesco and his companions. A newspaper recently published a cable datelined New York. In it the world was informed that Vesco and company had paid the law firm of Facio, Fournier, and Canas the sum of 50,000 dollars (430,000 colones) in fees owed for professional services. If two government ministers -- Facio and Canas -- receive such large fees as partners in this law firm, Minister Jimenez Veiga must have felt that this was a party he should not miss, and so he attempted the unfortunate defense of Mc Alpin. Jimenez Veiga is so much in the habit of giving votes of confidence to unfortunate colleagues that he must now, at Christmas, propose a vote of confidence for the ministers who are partners in such a good law firm, since it is good sense in the current government to do business with the support of one's official position.

Politics in His Blood

Jimenez Veiga has said that he has politics in his blood. Two distinguished national heroes are relatives of his, both of them former Presidents of the Republic: Jesus Jimenez and Ricardo Jimenez. What would Jimenez Veiga think of Ricardo if he were to see him -- as he now sees his father-in-law and protector doing -- defending Vesco from the accusation of having misappropriated funds amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars, to the detriment of investors in mutual funds? Let the Costa Ricans just imagine Ricardo Jimenez defending Al Capone back in the days when he was carrying out his misdeeds in the United States and Ricardo was governing the Costa Ricans! I do not believe that the minister has a valid argument when he says that Vesco was not convicted and that if he had been, it would be a different matter. Al Capone was not convicted for his misdeeds, but rather for not paying his taxes. What a conflict of conscience would present itself to Jimenez Veiga between his two relatives -- the one a relationship with irreproachable rectitude and a glorious period in the public posts of our country, and the other a relative who defends the immorality involved in the acts by Vesco and who utters one of his "ingenious" sayings: "If only more Vescos would come to Costa Rica!"

Ricardo and Figueres

Some time ago I reminded Figueres of the famous and exemplary letter from Ricardo, written while he was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Justice in reference to the dissolution of Congress. I think it would be opportune to repeat it now, so that the Costa Ricans may analyze, in this second case, the submissiveness of the President of the Republic's son-in-law. Figueres trampled on the Political Constitution by leaving the country without the permission of the Legislative Assembly. And Ricardo left his high position as Chief Justice of the Court when, in his opinion, the Constitution was being trampled on. And he wrote the following: "To the Supreme Tribunal of Justice. I do not know how my colleagues may judge

the matter, but in my opinion, the decree published in today's Diario Oficial concerning the dissolution of Congress is a mortal attack on the Constitution. My authority is derived from the Constitution, and it has been taken away by the suppression of its source. In order that my comrades may be aware of the reason behind my departure from the position I occupied among them, I am directing the present communication to them with the assurance of my esteem and respect. Ricardo Jimenez."

I see that Jimenez Veiga esteems the photograph of Ricardo, which he has in his office, more than he does the moral of his teachings, since otherwise he would necessarily have resigned from his ministry when his father-in-law rode roughshod over the Political Constitution, in order to be more consistent with the blood of his ancestor than with the kinship linking him to the President of the Republic.

In short, times are changing, and people are changing with them. It is a matter of time and expediency.

11,798

CSO: 4200-S